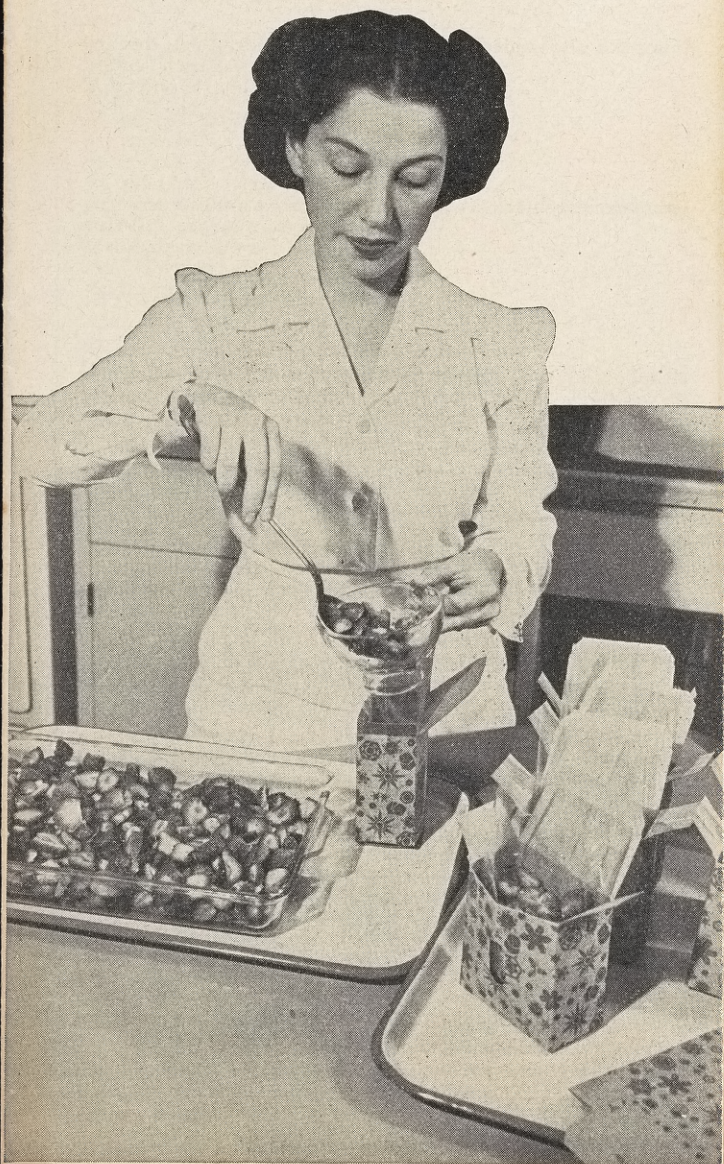


How to Prepare
Vegetables and Fruits
for **FREEZING**



HOW TO PREPARE VEGETABLES AND FRUITS FOR FREEZING

Freezing is one of the best ways of keeping vegetables and fruits. They may be frozen and stored in home freezer storage cabinets or taken to a community locker plant. When properly prepared, frozen, and stored, frozen foods keep almost all their natural color, flavor, and nutritive values.

How Freezing Preserves Foods

All fresh foods contain bacteria and other organisms that multiply and soon spoil the food at ordinary temperatures. Chemical substances called enzymes are also present in all living matter. In harvested plant materials they soon begin to impair the quality. Their action is slowed by freezing temperatures but is not stopped completely.

By checking the action of these invisible agents, freezing to 0° F. keeps foods for 6 months to more than a year in about the same condition as when they were first frozen.

Handle and Prepare Foods Carefully

Start with fresh fruits and vegetables of high quality. Use the varieties recommended for freezing by your State agricultural college. Some local varieties good for canning are not suited for freezing. Select only vegetables and fruits that are at the peak of maturity—just table ripe—and use in other ways any that are bruised or too soft.

Freeze fruits and vegetables the day they are picked—within a few hours if you possibly can. If you have to hold them more than 1 day before freezing, keep them in a refrigerator at 32° to 40° F., or cool vegetables in ice water and pack them in cracked ice.

Wash fruits and vegetables in pure water, using clean utensils. Peel them if necessary. Handle them as little as possible, especially ripe fruits.

Blanch Vegetables

All vegetables should be blanched (scalded in boiling water or steam for a few minutes) before freezing. This is necessary to prevent losses in flavor and quality during storage. It also preserves or brightens the color and slightly softens the products so they are easier to pack.

Blanch only a small quantity of food at a time—about one pound. Put the food in a fine-mesh wire or cheesecloth basket with handles and lower into boiling water or set on a rack over steam for the length of time given in the table. Blanching time is measured, in boiling, from the time the water boils again after the vegetables are put in, and, in steaming, from the time steam rises again.

For blanching in boiling water, use one gallon of water to a pound of the product; the water should

cover the food. Since the boiling point of water varies with elevation, the blanching time should be increased slightly at higher altitudes. If you live in a place that is 1,000 to 3,000 feet above sea level, add one-fourth of a minute to blanching time; 3,000 to 5,000 feet, one-half minute; 5,000 to 7,000 feet, three-fourths of a minute; 7,000 to 9,000 feet, one minute.

Dip the blanched products at once into cold water. Ice water is best, but running water at 50° to 60° F. will do. Cooling time is about the same as blanching time. The basket used for blanching is convenient for dipping vegetables in the cooling water. Drain and pack the cooled products at once.

The Right Kind of Package is Important

The cold air of the freezer tends to dry out foods. Excessive drying is called freezer burn. Food in the freezer must be protected from this loss of moisture by a well-made package of water-vapor-proof or highly water-vapor-resistant material.

The wrapping or container should impart no flavor or odor to the food. It should be easy to handle and seal and should not take up too much storage space or cost too much.

Various materials can be used for packing frozen foods. Which one you choose will depend in part on what you have on hand or can get in the stores.

Glass jars with tops and rubber rings and tin cans with tight tops give the best protection and can be used more than once. For acid fruits, use glass jars or enamel-lined or lacquer-lined cans, which are not affected by the fruit acids.

Special cellophanes are almost as good protection as cans or jars and take up less room. They can be sealed easily with a warm iron (heat-sealed). Cellophane can also be used to line paperboard cartons.

Waxed paperboard cups with tightly fitting waxed lids or waxed-paper bags give the next best protection in the freezer. They are relatively cheap and are easy to fill and to label. The bags can be heat-sealed.

Bags or containers made of other water-vapor-resistant materials, such as laminated paper, are satisfactory if properly sealed.

Special, double-waxed paper (waxed on both sides) is widely used for wrapping frozen foods. Like the waxed cups, it will not prevent drying as well as the special cellophanes do, but it is cheaper, fairly tough, and reasonably efficient for a short storage period if properly sealed.

The ordinary waxed lunch paper sold in grocery stores is only fair protection. If you must use it, wrap the product in two layers of the paper and seal the seams with special cold-storage tape, or heat seal with a warm iron.

Emergency Wrappings

A satisfactory bag can be made by heat sealing the edges of folded cellophane or double-waxed paper. A strip 7 by 21 inches can be folded to make a 6- by 10-inch bag with half-inch seams along each side and a 1-inch flap at the top.

A partially vaporproof covering for cans or jars is made by dipping clean muslin in melted paraffin. Dip the cloth, spread it flat, and let the paraffin harden. Then cut the material into squares large enough to fit over the top and well down the sides of the can or jar. Warm the square slightly, press it down closely over the top of the filled container, and tie it tightly with string. Such covers must be handled carefully or the wax will crack.

Glazing

Another home-made "wrap" for frozen food is a cover of ice. Freeze vegetables or fruits to 0° F. in a can or carton with straight sides, warm just enough to slip the food out in a block, refreeze, then dip the block quickly in water chilled to just above the freezing point. A thin film of ice will form over the food. Dip several times until the ice covering, or glaze, is one-sixteenth to one-eighth inch thick. Wrap the food in paper to protect the glaze, which should last for 3 to 6 months. It may have to be renewed if the food is to be kept longer.

Packing and Sealing

Sugar or Sirup for Fruits

Packing fruits in sugar or sugar sirup helps greatly in maintaining the color, texture, and flavor during and after defrosting.

In packing fruit with sugar, 3 to 5 parts of fruit (by weight) to 1 part of sugar, mixed evenly, is right for most fruits. See table for exact proportions.

If you do not have scales, estimate weights on the basis that tightly packed fruit weighs about as much as an equal volume of sugar. A 4-to-1 pack, therefore, would mean 4 cups of tightly packed fruit to 1 cup of sugar.

Make sugar sirup by stirring sugar into an equal quantity, by measure, of cold water until the sugar dissolves. Other proportions of sugar and water are sometimes better for certain products. (See the table.)

Dry sugar draws some moisture from fruit and may shrink it, but this is seldom important, especially if the fruit is to be cooked. Fruits keep their size and shape better in sirup than in dry sugar, but they are harder to pack and freeze.

Freezing Fruit Without Sugar

All fruits can be packed dry if sugar is unobtainable. To prevent darkening, light-colored fruits may be blanched or dipped in sodium bisulfite. Tree fruits such as freestone peaches and apricots may be frozen and stored whole if securely packaged. Special care

in defrosting and peeling whole frozen fruits is necessary. (See Thawing.)

Boysenberries, youngberries, and raspberries are better packed without sugar or sirup. They can be defrosted at ordinary room temperature either dry or in cold sirup.

Dipping Fruit in Sodium Bisulfite

Dipping in a sodium bisulfite solution will keep some kinds of cut fruits from discoloring. Fruit treated with bisulfite is not suitable for eating uncooked, but may be used for cooked sauces and in pies.

Ask for chemically pure sodium bisulfite at the drug store. For most fruits, add one ounce to each gallon of water; for apples, add only one-half ounce to a gallon. Never put a bisulfite solution in iron or copper containers, and do not leave the solution in the utensil after use. To treat apple slices or apricot, peach, or nectarine halves or slices, dip them in the sodium bisulfite solution for 1 minute. After sliced apples have been dipped they should be held at room temperature for 8 to 12 hours before being frozen so the solution can penetrate to the center of the slices.

Blanching Fruit

Blanching, like dipping in sodium bisulfite, will prevent discoloring of light-colored cut fruit. Fruit may lose considerable weight when blanched in water. Blanching in sirup causes less loss of weight but may be wasteful of sugar.

Crushed or Pureed Fruit

Frozen crushed fruit makes an excellent flavor base for ice cream, sherbets, and fruit drinks. It may be used in shortcakes and cobbler or as a sauce for ice cream. The natural flavor is very pronounced in crushed or pureed (pulped) fruit.

Fruit can be crushed with a wire potato masher or a fork or in a food chopper. A tinned sieve or a special cone-shaped fruit sieve can be used for making skinless, seedless purees. Galvanized or copper screen should not be used. Stir sugar in carefully to avoid beating in air.

A tight top or lid on the container will prevent spilling before freezing as well as drying during storage.

To make crushed fruit more attractive for shortcakes or sauce, mix a few whole berries or slices of larger fruit with the crushed material.

Packing Vegetables in Brine

For extra protection against drying, you may pack some vegetables in a weak salt solution. Make brine by adding one-half to one teaspoon of salt, according to taste, to each cup of water. Pack the vegetables to within one inch of the top of the container, cover them with the cold brine, and freeze. Before cooking it is best to defrost the brine.

Filling the Containers

Pack the prepared vegetables and fruits firmly into the containers. For a dry pack leave about half an inch of space at the top. For brine or sirup packs or for purees or crushed fruits leave about one inch of head space. If you use wrappings instead of containers, put enough food in each package to serve your family for one or two meals.

Use a funnel to fill packages that are to be heat-sealed, so that no food will touch the edges.

Heat Sealing

A warm flatiron or curling iron seals the edges and seams of cellophane and waxed-paper packages. Use just enough heat and pressure to melt the cellophane or wax and stick the edges together tightly. Too much heat may scorch the material and spoil the seal.

Label Packages Plainly

Mark each package or container to show the kind of product and date of storage, and, in community lockers, your locker number. Special stamps, inks, and pencils are made for labeling packages of frozen food. Or strips of cold-storage tape with the information written on in lead pencil may be pasted on the package. A simple and convenient label is a tag tied on with a string.

You may want to use wrappings or tape of different colors to identify different kinds of products, as red for meats, green for certain vegetables, blue for berries, and so on. Or colors may be used to indicate dates of storage, so that foods that have been stored longest may be used first.

Freezing

Foods should be frozen as soon as possible after packaging. If delay in getting them to the locker is unavoidable, they may be held in the home refrigerator for a few hours.

Rapid freezing is desirable. The speed of freezing depends on the temperature in the freezer, whether the food is in contact with the cooling units, the circulation of air, the thickness of the wrappings, and the size of the packages. Packages of medium size spread out on the cooling coils or plates in a rapid air stream will freeze in 6 to 8 hours or even less at 10° below zero. Satisfactory freezing is possible at 0° F. if the packages are spread out so that air can move freely around them. A higher temperature than this is not recommended for either freezing or storage.

Using Frozen Products

Thawing

Frozen vegetables are usually cooked without being thawed. If you prefer, however, they can be thawed in the package at room temperature or in warm water. It takes 3 to 4 hours to thaw a one-pound package of frozen food in 75° F. air. To thaw more quickly,

immerse the sealed package in 90° to 100° F. running water.

In the home refrigerator, frozen food will take 12 to 48 hours to thaw.

Light-colored whole fruits such as apricots and peaches will discolor quickly when allowed to thaw exposed to the air at room temperature. Such fruits when taken from freezing storage may be kept in the home refrigerator for a short time until they have become soft enough to cut but have not thawed. Halve and pit the softened but still frozen fruit and dip the halves in cold water for a few seconds. Then strip the peel off by slipping a knife blade under one edge and pulling. The partly frozen fruit should then be completely defrosted—in boiling sirup if it is to be cooked, or in cold sirup if it is to be served raw. If defrosted in cold sirup, fruit should be kept in it until served or cooked, to keep it from discoloring.

Thawed frozen foods tend to spoil quickly. They should be used or cooked promptly.

Cooking Vegetables

Frozen vegetables cook in about half the time needed for fresh ones.

Put a small amount of lightly salted water in the saucepan or, if the vegetables were packed in brine, use part of the brine. One-quarter to one-half cup of liquid is enough. Bring the liquid to a boil, add the frozen vegetables, and when boiling starts again, cover the pan tightly. After 2 or 3 minutes, break the melting mass of food apart with a fork so the heat will reach all parts evenly, then cover again and turn down the heat so that it will keep the water boiling gently. Cooking time is measured from the time the water boils again after the food is added. In using a steamer, have the water boiling before putting the vegetables over it and measure cooking time from the moment a heavy cloud of steam rises again.

Some vegetables are better cooked in a small quantity of water and some are better steamed, but most may be cooked either way.

Proper cooking will save much of the vitamin and mineral values that have been preserved in frozen foods by careful handling. Use the cooking water or brine to get all possible food values.

Serving Fruit

Frozen fruits are generally eaten uncooked and not quite defrosted. Serve them like fresh fruit.

Crushed fruit may be used as sauce for ice cream or in shortcake. Tree fruits frozen without sugar may be put right into the saucepan for making sauce or preserves, or they may be defrosted in cold sirup and eaten raw unless they have been dipped in bisulfite solution. The smooth texture of sugar-packed, quick-frozen fruit puree makes it delicious when served frozen without further preparation.

Leave a few ice crystals floating in frozen fruit juices to be used for drinking, but do not add ice.

DIRECTIONS FOR PREPARING VEGETABLES AND FRUITS FOR FREEZING

Vegetable or Fruit	Preparation	Blanching	Packing	Vegetable or Fruit	Preparation	Blanching	Packing
Apples.....	Wash, peel, trim, core, and section or slice. Slices may be held in weak brine during packing, or dipped in sodium bisulfite solution, or blanched.	Blanch in boiling water 3 to 4 minutes; cool in air or cold water.	For a loose pack, dry-freeze on trays before packaging; otherwise freeze in package.	Cranberries.....	Sort and screen, discarding inferior berries. Wash thoroughly.		Freeze whole without sugar or sirup, or puree and pack with an equal part of sugar.
Apricots.....	Sort, wash, halve, and pit. For sliced, crushed, or pureed fruit, scald 15 to 30 seconds and peel. Dip in sodium bisulfite solution if desired or practicable, or blanch.	Blanch halves or slices in boiling water or steam 3 to 4 minutes, or in boiling sirup, 15 to 20 percent sugar, for 3 minutes. Cool in water or spread out in air.	Blanched apricots may be frozen loose on trays before packaging. Cover unblanched fruit with chilled 40- to 50-percent sugar sirup, or mix halves thoroughly with dry sugar, 5, 4, or 3 to 1. ¹	Figs.....	Figs for freezing should be riper than for fresh shipments. Wash and sort; cut off stems. Leave whole or peel, halve, or slice.		Pack in 35-percent sugar sirup. Freeze promptly after packaging. For preserves or sauce, freeze whole without sugar or sirup.
Asparagus.....	Sort into 3 diameter groups and cut into tips (4½ inches) or stalks (6 inches). 1 to 2 inches of trimmed-off stalks may be frozen to use in soup. Wash thoroughly. Do not use iron utensils.	Blanch in boiling water or steam—small diameter, 1½ minutes; medium, 2 minutes; large, 3 minutes. Cool in running water.	Pack with or without brine. With dry pack, leave containers open to hasten freezing; seal them when food is frozen.	Grapes.....	Wash and sort; discard inferior grapes.		Pack whole in 35- to 40-percent sugar sirup. Use enough sirup to keep grapes well covered during freezing and storage.
Beans, lima.....	Sort beans, discarding imperfect ones and segregating large white beans for separate packing. Wash in cold water.	Blanch in boiling water or steam—small beans, 1½ minutes; large beans, 2½ minutes. Cool in running water.	Pack dry or in brine.	Mushrooms.....	Discard defective mushrooms. Sort into button size and larger and carefully wash in cold water.	Blanch button-sized mushrooms or pieces 2 minutes; larger sizes and pieces, 3 to 4 minutes. Cool in cold water.	Pack in brine.
Beans, snap.....	Select sound, fresh beans, wash thoroughly, snap and string if necessary, and cut or break if desired. Avoid the use of iron utensils.	Blanch in boiling water or steam, 1½ to 2 minutes. Cool in running water.	Pack with or without brine. Better texture is usually obtained with brine. If packed dry, leave containers open for quick freezing, then seal.	Nectarines.....	Sort, wash, drain, halve, and pit. May be sliced, coarsely crushed, or pureed. Use sodium bisulfite dip if desired or practicable, or blanch.	Same as for apricots.	Pack halves or slices promptly with 40-percent sirup, 35-percent for very sweet fruit. Chill sirup before adding. Mix crushed fruit or puree with sugar, 3 to 1.
Beets.....	Cut off tops. Scald in boiling water ½ minute and cool in water quickly for easy peeling. Slice, or dice into ¼-inch cubes.	Blanch slices or cubes in boiling water or steam 2 to 3 minutes; cool in water.	Pack without brine.	Peaches, clingstone....	Select peaches picked when fully ripe. Sort, and peel by dipping in hot (180° F. to boiling) 2- to 5-percent lye solution for 45 seconds to 1½ minutes; remove fruit to cold, clean water and rub off skin with hands. Rinse in cold water. Pit and slice.	Same as for apricots.	Pack and freeze without sugar or sirup.
Blackberries, dewberries, loganberries, boysenberries, and similar berries.	Select plump, well-ripened berries. Sort, wash, and drain, handling carefully to avoid bruising berries.		Freeze whole berries on trays or in containers. Pack in sugar (5 or 4 to 1) for pie or jam; in sirup for dessert use. Mix crushed or pureed berries with sugar, 3 to 1.	Peaches, freestone.....	Select firm-ripe, richly colored fruit. Sort and peel, loosening skin by 15 to 30 seconds in live steam or boiling water. Halve and pit. Dip in sodium bisulfite solution, or blanch.	Same as for apricots.	Cover halves or slices promptly with chilled 40- or 50-percent sugar sirup. Mix coarsely crushed or pureed fruit with sugar, 3 to 1.
Blueberries and huckleberries.	Select large tender-skinned berries. Sort or screen, wash, and drain.		Berries to be used in pies may be packed without sugar or sirup. Pack berries for dessert use in a 40- to 45-percent sugar sirup.	Peas.....	Shell ripe but not overmature peas of green-skinned, wrinkle-seeded varieties; not canning varieties except those of Thomas Laxton type. Discard overlarge, hard, or starchy peas. Wash.	Blanch in boiling water or steam 1 minute; cool rapidly.	Pack promptly with or without brine.
Broccoli.....	Select dark-green, compact heads with sound stalks. Trim off large leaves and woody stems. Wash thoroughly. Split very large stems lengthwise. Sort into 3 sizes of stalks.	Blanch in boiling water or steam—small stalks, 3 minutes; medium, 3½ minutes; large, 4 minutes. Cool in water.	Pack with or without brine.	Peppers, green and pimiento.	Wash and cut into halves, quarters, or slices, removing the seeds.	Blanching not necessary, but makes packing easier. Use boiling water or steam, 2 minutes; cool promptly.	Cover with brine.
Brussels sprouts.....	Select firm, compact, moderately large sprouts of bright deep-green color. Discard inferior sprouts. Wash and divide into 3 size groups.	Blanch in boiling water or steam—small, 3 minutes; medium, 4 minutes; large, 5 minutes. Cool in water.	Pack with or without brine.	Persimmons.....	Sort soft-ripe, sweet fruit, wash, cut up, and pulp. Peel before pulping if desired.		Pack with sugar, 5 or 4 to 1, thoroughly mixed.
Cabbage.....	Select solid, green-and-white heads, discard outside and defective leaves; Cut heads into convenient-sized pieces or separate larger single leaves. Wash.	Blanch cut sections 3 to 4 minutes, depending on size. Scald separate leaves for 1½ minutes. Cool in water.	Pack with or without brine.	Prunes and plums.....	Sort, wash, halve, and pit.		Pack prune halves with sugar sirup or coat with sugar; sirup pack is preferable. Puree plums with sugar in ratio of 4 or 3 to 1.
Cantaloup (Persian and similar melons).	Peel and remove seeds; dice, cut in slices or balls, or crush coarsely.		Pack balls or slices in layers between waxed-paper sheets to permit separation for use without complete thawing. Mix crushed melon with sugar, 4 to 1 or 3 to 1.	Pumpkin and squash...	Winter varieties: Peel, discard seeds, cut into 1-inch cubes, cook until soft, mash, and cool. Summer varieties: Slice in ½-inch pieces.	Blanch in boiling water 3 to 4 minutes; cool.	Pack without brine.
Carrots.....	Cut off tops and discard inferior carrots. Scrub with a stiff brush under cold running water, trim, and dice into ¼-inch cubes. Freeze whole carrots only when small, tender, and young.	Blanch diced carrots in boiling water or steam 2½ minutes. Cool in cold water.	Pack with or without brine.	Raspberries, black....	Carefully sort and screen berries to retain large, full-ripe dark ones. Do not wash unless necessary. If berries are washed, drain them thoroughly.		Pack whole berries dry; seedless puree with sugar, 3 to 1.
Cauliflower.....	Select head with white, compact curd. Break up into pieces not over 1 inch thick. Wash.	Blanch in boiling water 2½ to 3½ minutes. Cool in cold water.	Pack with or without brine.	Raspberries, red, purple, or yellow.	Select firm-ripe, brightly colored berries and handle with more care than other berries. Sort, but wash only if necessary and then drain thoroughly.		Pack whole berries with 40- to 50-percent sugar sirup; or with sugar, 5, 4, or 3 to 1; or dry. Freeze dry berries loose before packaging. Mix puree with sugar, 3 to 1.
Cherries, sour.....	Sort, wash, and drain bright-red, fairly firm, acid-flavored cherries. A short soaking in water may make pitting easier. For a flavor base, crush coarsely.		Pack whole fruit with sugar 5, 4, or 3 to 1. Pack crushed fruit or juice with sugar, 3 or 2 to 1.	Rhubarb.....	Wash, trim, and cut tender stalks into 1-inch pieces.	Blanch in boiling water or sirup 1½ minutes, cool in cold water.	Pack without sugar or sirup.
Cherries, sweet.....	Stem, sort, and wash large, firm-ripe cherries. Pitting not necessary but pits give an almondlike flavor. Pit and crush for sauce.		Pack whole cherries with sugar sirup. Pack coarsely crushed fruit or cherry juice with sugar, 3 to 1.	Soybeans, green edible..	Boil or steam for 5 minutes, cool, and squeeze the beans out of the pods. Wash and drain.	No additional blanching required.	Pack with or without brine.
Corn, sweet, whole cut..	Silk and trim ears.	Scald ears in boiling water for 2 minutes, and cool in cold water. Cut corn off cob with a sharp knife and rinse kernels quickly in cold water, skimming any chaff off surface.	Pack without brine.	Spinach and other greens.	Thoroughly wash deep-green, tender greens. Remove imperfect leaves and larger, tough stems.	Blanch in boiling water or steam for 1½ minutes. Cool promptly in cold water and drain thoroughly.	Pack without brine.
Corn on cob.....	Silk and trim. Cut ears into about 3-inch lengths and separate them into 3 diameter classes.	Blanch in steam or boiling water—small diameter, 7 minutes; medium, 9 minutes; large, 11 minutes. Cool in cold water as quickly as possible.	Wrap one or several ears in vaporproof paper and twist the ends or heat-seal. Freeze on trays or in containers, not too many ears in one container.	Strawberries.....	Sort and hull. Wash and drain thoroughly. Leave berries whole, slice, or crush coarsely.		Cover whole berries with sugar sirup. Mix sliced or crushed berries with sugar, 3 to 1.
				Turnips and rutabagas..	Cut off tops, wash, and peel. Dice into ¼-inch cubes.	Blanch in boiling water or steam 2 to 3 minutes. Cool in cold water.	Pack without brine.

¹ "5, 4, or 3 to 1" means number of parts of fruit to one of sugar, by weight.

Equipment Needed

1. Tables, a sink, and running water.
2. A set of household scales, if possible.
3. Suitable containers or packaging materials and a wide-mouthed funnel for filling packages.
4. Pans, stainless knives, cutting boards, measuring cups, large spoons, and ladles.
5. Paraffin, cold-storage tape, or other material for sealing containers; a flatiron or curling iron for heat sealing; tags or crayons for labeling; and a notebook for records.
6. FOR FRUIT: Colander or wire-screen sieve for washing fruit. Enamel, earthenware, or other noncorroding containers for washing and holding prepared fruit. Containers for mixing fruit with sugar or making sirup. Noncorroding screen sieve or special conical fruit sieve for pressing fruit into a smooth pulp, or puree.
7. FOR VEGETABLES: A good stove. Enamel or aluminum kettles with lids, for blanching; large kettles or a handy sink for cooling blanched vegetables; a fine-mesh wire or cheesecloth basket, with a cover and handles, for lowering the food into the blanching kettle and the cooling water; a screen or cloth drain for the cooled vegetables. A clock with a second hand to time the blanching period.

This pamphlet is a revision of and supersedes AWI-63, *Preparing Home-Grown Vegetables and Fruits for Freezing*.

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All fresh foods contain bacteria and other organisms that multiply and soon spoil the food at ordinary temperatures. Chemical substances called enzymes are also present in all living matter. In harvested plant materials they soon begin to impair the quality. Their action is slowed by freezing temperatures but is not stopped completely.

By checking the action of these invisible agents, freezing to 0° F. keeps foods for 6 months to more than a year in about the same condition as when they were first frozen.

Handle and Prepare Foods Carefully

Start with fresh fruits and vegetables of high quality. Use the varieties recommended for freezing by your State agricultural college. Some local varieties good for canning are not suited for freezing. Select only vegetables and fruits that are at the peak of maturity—just table ripe—and use in other ways any that are bruised or too soft.

Freeze fruits and vegetables the day they are picked—within a few hours if you possibly can. If you have to hold them more than 1 day before freezing, keep them in a refrigerator at 32° to 40° F., or cool vegetables in ice water and pack them in cracked ice.

Wash fruits and vegetables in pure water, using clean utensils. Peel them if necessary. Handle them as little as possible, especially ripe fruits.

Blanch Vegetables

All vegetables should be blanched (scalded in boiling water or steam for a few minutes) before freezing. This is necessary to prevent losses in flavor and quality during storage. It also preserves or brightens the color and slightly softens the products so they are easier to pack.

Blanch only a small quantity of food at a time—about one pound. Put the food in a fine-mesh wire or cheesecloth basket with handles and lower into boiling water or set on a rack over steam for the length of time given in the table. Blanching time is measured, in boiling, from the time the water boils again after the vegetables are put in, and, in steaming, from the time steam rises again.

For blanching in boiling water, use one gallon of water to a pound of the product; the water should

cover the food. Since the boiling point of water varies with elevation, the blanching time should be increased slightly at higher altitudes. If you live in a place that is 1,000 to 3,000 feet above sea level, add one-fourth of a minute to blanching time; 3,000 to 5,000 feet, one-half minute; 5,000 to 7,000 feet, three-fourths of a minute; 7,000 to 9,000 feet, one minute.

Dip the blanched products at once into cold water. Ice water is best, but running water at 50° to 60° F. will do. Cooling time is about the same as blanching time. The basket used for blanching is convenient for dipping vegetables in the cooling water. Drain and pack the cooled products at once.

The Right Kind of Package is Important

The cold air of the freezer tends to dry out foods. Excessive drying is called freezer burn. Food in the freezer must be protected from this loss of moisture by a well-made package of water-vapor-proof or highly water-vapor-resistant material.

The wrapping or container should impart no flavor or odor to the food. It should be easy to handle and seal and should not take up too much storage space or cost too much.

Various materials can be used for packing frozen foods. Which one you choose will depend in part on what you have on hand or can get in the stores.

Glass jars with tops and rubber rings and tin cans with tight tops give the best protection and can be used more than once. For acid fruits, use glass jars or enamel-lined or lacquer-lined cans, which are not affected by the fruit acids.

Special cellophanes are almost as good protection as cans or jars and take up less room. They can be sealed easily with a warm iron (heat-sealed). Cellophane can also be used to line paperboard cartons.

Waxed paperboard cups with tightly fitting waxed lids or waxed-paper bags give the next best protection in the freezer. They are relatively cheap and are easy to fill and to label. The bags can be heat-sealed.

Bags or containers made of other water-vapor-resistant materials, such as laminated paper, are satisfactory if properly sealed.

Special, double-waxed paper (waxed on both sides) is widely used for wrapping frozen foods. Like the waxed cups, it will not prevent drying as well as the special cellophanes do, but it is cheaper, fairly tough, and reasonably efficient for a short storage period if properly sealed.

The ordinary waxed lunch paper sold in grocery stores is only fair protection. If you must use it, wrap the product in two layers of the paper and seal the seams with special cold-storage tape, or heat seal with a warm iron.

Equipment Needed

1. Tables, a sink, and running water.
2. A set of household scales, if possible.
3. Suitable containers or packaging materials and a wide-mouthed funnel for filling packages.
4. Pans, stainless knives, cutting boards, measuring cups, large spoons, and ladles.
5. Paraffin, cold-storage tape, or other material for sealing containers; a flatiron or curling iron for heat sealing; tags or crayons for labeling; and a notebook for records.
6. **FOR FRUIT:** Colander or wire-screen sieve for washing fruit. Enamel, earthenware, or other noncorroding containers for washing and holding prepared fruit. Containers for mixing fruit with sugar or making sirup. Noncorroding screen sieve or special conical fruit sieve for pressing fruit into a smooth pulp, or puree.
7. **FOR VEGETABLES:** A good stove. Enamel or aluminum kettles with lids, for blanching; large kettles or a handy sink for cooling blanched vegetables; a fine-mesh wire or cheesecloth basket, with a cover and handles, for lowering the food into the blanching kettle and the cooling water; a screen or cloth drain for the cooled vegetables. A clock with a second hand to time the blanching period.

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